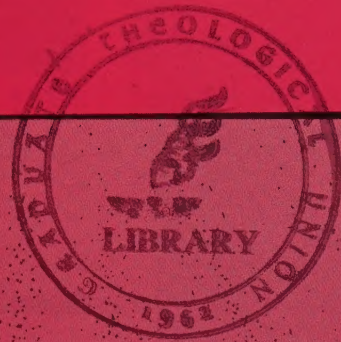


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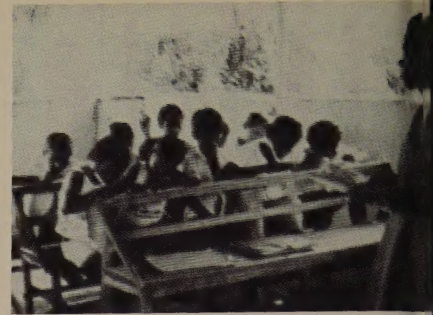


Easter 1985

"LET US CELEBRATE THIS GREATEST OF FEASTS ..."



2 *A COLLECTIVE WAY:* We continue our series of questions and answers with Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare Movement, on its spirituality of unity.



8 *OPERATION MAGNIFICAT:* The dedication to put the words of the Gospel practice became the launching pad for the experience of human promotion.

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livingCity **4**



Easter 1985

LET US CELEBRATE THIS GREATEST OF FEASTS

"Let us celebrate this greatest of feasts for the Lord has risen, and together with him he has raised the whole world."

"On the fruits of Christ's Resurrection"

St. John Chrysostom

Cover drawing by Denise Silva.

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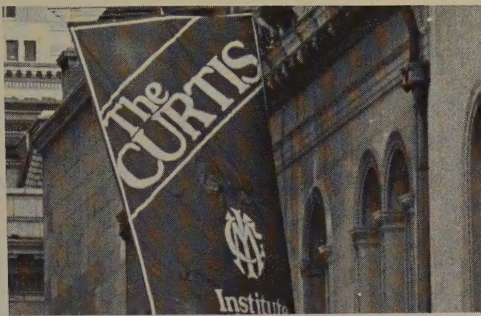
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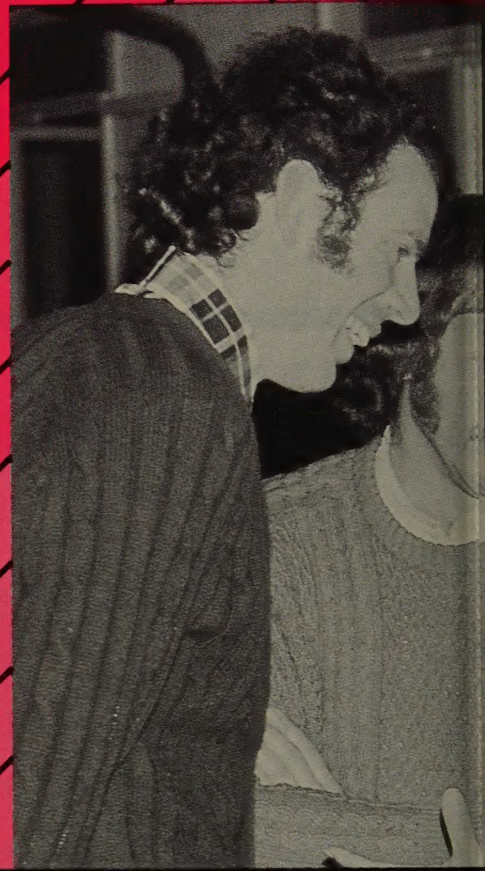
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THE SPIRITUALITY OF UNITY

A COLLECTIVE WAY

by CHIARA LUBICH



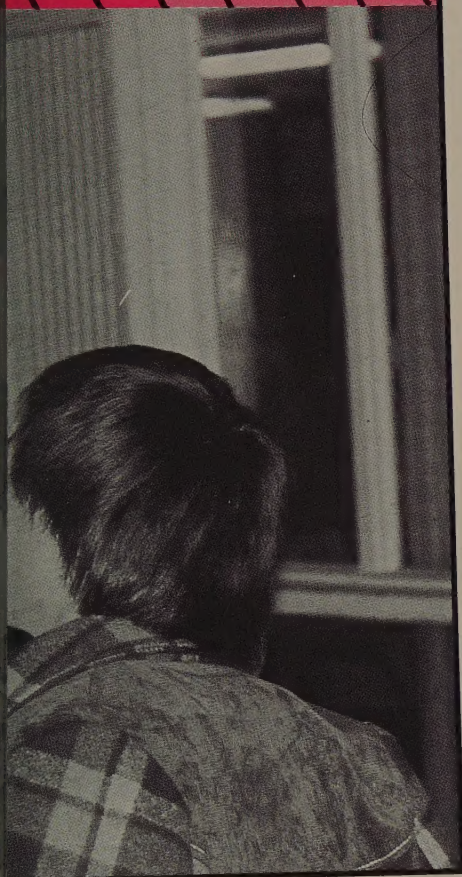
Question: Can we call the spirituality that the members of the Focolare Movement follow a collective spirituality?

Our way, since it is "the way of unity" is a collective way. If we compare it with other spiritualities existing in the Church we note that they emphasize the individual aspect, even if every spiritual way in the Church of Christ, brought to life by an authentic charism, is not and can never remain only on an individual level. The mystery of the Mystical Body does not allow us to conceive, in our religion, of a spiritual way that is totally individual. Since we are members of a body, the positive or negative action of a member has a consequence on the others. Besides this, we cannot be Christians today if we do not emphasize love of neighbor which helps us to go ahead together.

In the ways we mentioned above, however, one, generally speaking, goes to God along a personal way which oftentimes leads to perfection.

The apex of spiritual life is the mystical union of the soul with the Trinity within itself. Perfection consists in the intimate and uninterrupted colloquy of the individual with God, and this comes about in what is called the "transforming union." The person, while remaining a separate individual, becomes "one" with God. To reach this level one needs silence, recollection, and, naturally, solitude in order to be able to retreat into the "inner self."

We are probably all familiar with an important little book called *The Imitation of Christ*. It has helped and continues to help, many to find union with God.



In one chapter there is a passage that says: "Very many great saints avoided the company of men wherever possible and chose to serve God in solitude. One writer has said, 'As often as I have been among men I have returned less a man.... It is easier to stay at home than to be sufficiently on guard while away....'"

'God and his holy angels will draw near to him who withdraws from friends and acquaintances'."¹

Times have changed, however, and it is possible to reach union with God in other ways.

The theologian Charles Truhlar wrote: "Since the human person is an integral

part of the world, the world, in the Christian past was, generally speaking, evaluated differently than the way it is evaluated by Christians today. It is also true to say therefore that living with others is considered differently than it was in the past."²

Pope Paul VI, in his homily at the conclusion of the last session of the Second Vatican Council, affirmed: "Never before as on this occasion has the Church felt such a need to know, to draw close to, to understand, to penetrate, to serve, to evangelize society around it, to welcome it, almost pursuing it in its rapid and constantly changing course." The documents of the council state: "The faithful must live in the closest possible union with their fellow human beings...."

The language of the past has changed. The Holy Spirit, through the Church, is urging the individual to go out to others.

However, the Holy Spirit is the one who desires the sanctification of each person and helps him or her to achieve it. If, therefore, today he is pointing in this direction it means that we *can* reach God through our neighbor.

The Holy Spirit, twenty years before the Council, lead us in this direction—to make this decisive turn towards our neighbor.

Ours, in fact, is a way in which we go to God *through* our neighbor. I—my neighbor—God was the expression used by Igino Giordani to describe our way. We go to God through

our neighbor, or better, we go to God *with* our neighbor.

It is a way, therefore, that is collective, communitarian. And it is in this collective way that individuals achieve even their own personal perfection.

- 1) *The Imitation of Christ*, book 1, ch. 20;
2) *Lessico di spiritualita'* by Charles Truhlar, Brescia, 1973, p. 23; 3) *Gaudium et Spes*, 62.

Question: In the past you explained how it is possible, through mutual love, to establish the presence of Jesus in the midst within a group. Can you tell us if, besides living the new commandment of Jesus, there are other ways that help to maintain this presence of Jesus?

There is one sentence of the Gospel that in a particular way seems to help in our efforts at maintaining a constant presence of Jesus in the midst and it is: "So then, if you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back and present your offering."¹

Jesus is asking here that the initiative towards reconciliation be taken not only by the party causing disunity but by the other person involved as well. This is what is new. In this way unity, and with it peace, is assured.

However, one element that immediately comes into play when the members of the

"The 'interior castle' as Saint Teresa called the soul inhabited by 'His Majesty' ... is a magnificent reality. It is the apex of sanctity sought on an individual level. Perhaps the moment has come to discover, illuminate and edify for God what we could call God's 'exterior castle,' with him spiritually present in the midst of humanity."
(Georges Rouault: "Nazareth").

Movement find themselves in this situation, that is, without the presence of Jesus in the midst, is their love for the cross and, therefore, for that feeling of disorientation, of discomfort that the lack of unity brings on. This feeling of disorientation is caused by the disunity and it reminds us of Jesus on the cross when he cried out: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"²

In our Movement, furthermore, we also have other means that we use in order to keep unity ever-new.

We find it very useful, for example, to communicate our experiences on living the word of God. This starts right at the beginning of the person's spiritual life.

It is a way of working for our neighbor's sanctity as we would for our own and it helps to block out that shadow of self love that can make its way in if we are intent solely upon seeking our own personal sanctification.

The help that persons more mature in the Movement can give us has also been proven to be very useful—help in explaining how to overcome difficult moments, in shedding light on a question through their own personal experiences, in removing difficulties that can hinder others in their efforts to live this spirituality.

For the core members of the Movement another practice that is indispensable is



called "the moment of truth" in which we give one another a hand in eliminating our defects and in encouraging one another to grow in virtue.

It is a way we go along together in which we look out for the spiritual growth of the other as we do for our own because what counts is the glory of God.

Mutual love, lived in a radical way, generates—as Pope Paul VI once said—the presence of Jesus in the midst of the members of the Movement and of those Christians who desire to commit themselves to achieving this presence as well, thus helping in the sanctification of each individual.

The "interior castle", as Saint Teresa called the soul inhabited by "His Majesty," to be discovered and to be

enlightened, is a magnificent reality. It is the apex of sanctity sought on an individual level.

Perhaps the moment has come to discover, illuminate, and edify for God what we could call God's "exterior castle", with him spiritually present in the midst of humanity, which is nothing other than the Church, there where we are. It is the Church which, through a collective spirituality can become always more itself, more beautiful as the mystical spouse of Christ, a foretaste of the heavenly Jerusalem of which it is written: "This is God's dwelling among men. He shall dwell with them and they shall be his people and he shall be their God who is always with them."³ □

1) Mt. 5:23-24; 2) Mt. 27:46; 3) Rv. 21:3.

“We cannot turn back...”

The aspects of ecumenism today and the struggle for the peaceful development of peoples were often the themes of Pope John Paul II's talks as he visited Canada. We are publishing excerpts from two of these talks in which he stated in a powerful way the paths to be taken in our work in these areas.

The Anglican Cathedral in Toronto was the sight of an ecumenical meeting which took place on September 14 during Pope John Paul II's visit to Canada. Present there were representatives of many Christian Churches and Communions.

I am deeply pleased to join in the prayer of praise and petition with all of you who represent the different Churches and Christian Communions throughout Canada. ...We are disciples of Jesus, and together we go to him. We go to listen to his word so that he may teach us as he once taught the crowd that gathered round him on the mountain. We wish to be instructed and inspired by his message of salvation. We also wish to pray together for the gift of unity among all Christians and to unite our hearts in praise of God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit....

Exactly twenty years ago today, on September 14, 1964, my predecessor Paul VI addressed those taking part in the Second Vatican Council as they gathered to begin the Third General Session, which was to promulgate the Constitution on the Church and the Decree on Ecumenism. Towards the end of his address he spoke directly to the Observers from other Churches and ecclesial Communities, saying: “We wish to assure you once more of our aim and hope to be able one

day to remove every obstacle, every misunderstanding, every suspicion that still prevents us from feeling fully ‘of one heart and one soul’ in Christ and in his Church.... This is something of the greatest importance, having its roots in the mysterious counsels of God, and we shall strive, in humility and piety, to dispose ourselves to be worthy of so great a grace”.

In the twenty years that have elapsed since these words were spoken, we can rejoice to see the greatest strides that have been made, for indeed many obstacles, misunderstandings and suspicions have been removed. For all of this we give thanks to God. At the same time, I am grateful for this occasion, and others such as this, which give us the opportunity to appreciate more fully what God's grace has wrought in our midst, and which give us renewed strength and courage for pursuing together the path which still lies ahead....

We cannot turn back on this difficult but vital task, for it is essentially linked with our mission of proclaiming to all humanity the message of salvation. The restoration of the complete unity of Christians, for which we so greatly yearn and pray, is of crucial importance for the evangelization of the world. Millions of our contemporaries still do not know Christ, and millions more who have heard

of Christ are hindered from accepting the Christian faith because of our tragic division. Indeed, the reason Jesus prayed that we might be one was precisely “so that the world might believe” (Jn. 17:21). The proclamation of the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ is greatly obstructed by doctrinal division among the followers of the Saviour. On the other hand, the work of evangelization bears fruit when Christians of different communions, though not yet fully one, collaborate as brothers and sisters in Christ, to the degree possible and with respect to their particular traditions....

Ecumenical collaboration, as we have discovered, can take many forms: working together in projects of fraternal service, engaging in theological dialogue and joint ventures to understand our troubled past, cooperative actions for justice and for the humanizing of the technological society, and many others. All of these are of great value and need to be continued in earnest, especially those which promote the truth and help us grow in fraternal charity. At the same time, we need to remember the primacy of the spiritual activities which the Second Vatican Council considered as the very soul of the ecumenical movement. I am referring to the faithful practice of public and private prayer for reconciliation and unity, and to ►

the pursuit of personal conversion and holiness of life. Without these, all other efforts will lack depth and the vitality of faith....

There can be no progress towards unity among us where there is no growth in holiness of life. In the beatitudes, Jesus indicates the way to holiness: "Blessed are the poor in spirit... Blessed are those who mourn... Blessed are the meek... Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...."

In seeking to be counted among these "blessed ones" we shall grow in holiness ourselves; but at the same time we shall also be making a contribution to the unity of all followers of Christ, and thus to the reconciliation of the world. True holiness of life, which draws us closer to the heart of the Saviour, will strengthen our bonds of charity with all people and especially with other Christians.

Let us strive to be counted among these "blessed ones" of the beatitudes, "hungering and thirsting for righteousness" in a technological age, praying for unity with one another and with all who believe in Christ, yearning in hope for the day when "there will be only one flock and one shepherd" (Jn. 10:16).

In Edmonton Pope John Paul II celebrated Mass dedicated to the theme of development of peoples and solidarity. More than 150,000 faithful attended the Mass, many of whom were immigrants and refugees from the Third World.

The God of the Covenant is a God of peace. Peace on earth is a good that belongs to his

Kingdom and to his salvation. This good is obtained in justice and faithfulness to the divine commandments. This good, which is peace, is promised to us in different spheres: as the interior good of our conscience, as the good of our human living together, and finally as a social and international good.

This last meaning was above all what Paul VI had in mind when he wrote these memorable words: "The new name for peace is development".

We have listened today to the Gospel about the final judgment with the same emotion as always. This passage touches some of the most fundamental questions of our faith and morality. These two fields are strictly linked to each other.

Our faith in Jesus Christ finds here a kind of final expression: The "Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son" (Jn. 5:22). In today's Gospel Christ stands before us as our Judge. He has a special right to make this judgment: indeed he became one of us, our Brother. This brotherhood with the human race—and at the same time his brotherhood with every single person—has led him to the Cross and the Resurrection.

Thus he judges in the name of his solidarity with each person and likewise in the name of our solidarity with him, who is our Brother and Redeemer and whom we discover in every human being: "I was hungry ... I was thirsty ... I was a stranger ... naked ... sick ... in prison..." (Mt. 25:33-36).

And those called to judgment—on his right hand and on



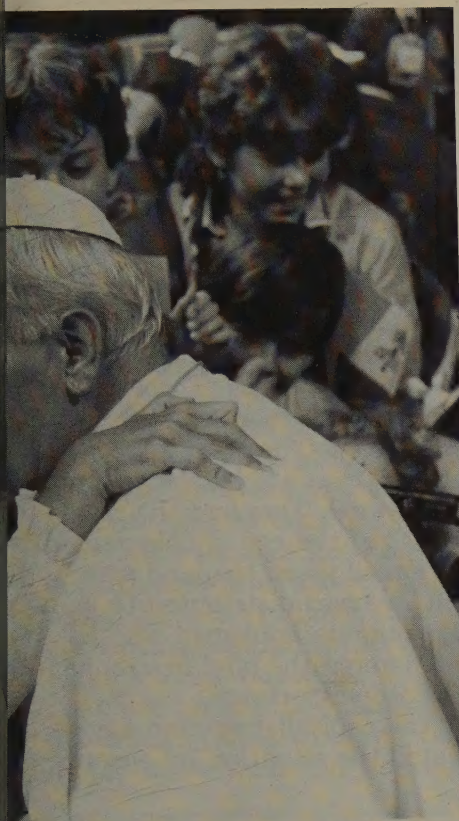
his left—will ask: "When and where? When and where have we seen you like this? When and where have we done what you said? Or: When and where have we not done it?"

The answer: "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt. 25:40). And, on the contrary: "As you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me" (Mt. 25:45).

"To one of the least of these my brethren." Thus: to man, to an individual human being in need.

Yet the Second Vatican Council, following the whole of Tradition, warns us not to stop at an "individualistic" interpretation of Christian ethics, since Christian ethics also has its social dimension. The human person lives in a community, in society. And with the community he shares hunger and thirst and sickness and malnutrition and misery and all the deficiencies that result therefrom. In his or her own person the human being is meant to experience the needs of others.

So it is that Christ the Judge speaks of "one of the least of



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Pope John Paul II with a group of children and their teachers in Montreal.

the brethren" and at the same time he is speaking of each and of all.

Yes. He is speaking of the whole universal dimension of injustice and evil. He is speaking of what today we are accustomed to call the North-South contrast. Hence not only East-West, but also North-South: the increasingly wealthier North, and the increasingly poorer South.... In the light of Christ's words, this poor South will judge the rich North. And the poor people and poor nations—poor in different ways, not only lacking food, but also deprived of freedom and other human rights—will judge those people who take these goods away from them, amassing to themselves the imperialistic monopoly of economic and political supremacy at the expense of others....

In the midst of each of these situations stands Christ himself, and as Redeemer and Judge he says: "You did it to me", "you did it not to me."

Nevertheless he wishes, in this final judgment—which is constantly in preparation and which in a certain sense is

constantly present—to bear witness first of all to the good that has been done.

And here also that significant expression of the teaching of the Church takes a start, whose principal formulation became the Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*. What was the inner concern of Paul VI and the universal Church became a dynamic action and a loud appeal that echoes to this day: "It is not just a matter of eliminating hunger, or even of reducing poverty. The struggle against destitution, though urgent and necessary, is not enough. It is

May the God of peace be with us! This cry brings with it the whole drama of our age, the whole threat. The nuclear threat? Certainly!

But even more: the whole threat of injustice, the threat coming from the rigid structures of those systems which man is not able to pass through—those systems which do not open themselves so as to permit themselves to go out towards man, to go out towards the development of peoples, to go out towards justice, with all its requirements, and towards peace.

Is the global balance not perhaps ever increasing—the global balance of what we "have not done for one of the

"There can be no progress towards unity among us where there is no growth in holiness of life."

a question, rather, of building a world where every man, no matter what his race, religion or nationality, can live a fully human life, freed from servitude imposed on him by other men or by natural forces; a world where freedom is not an empty word and where the poor man Lazarus can sit down at the same table with the rich man" (No. 47).

Yes, "development" is the new name for peace. Peace is necessary; it is an imperative of our time. And so is this development or progress: the progress of all the disadvantaged....

least of the brethren"? for millions of the least of the brethren? for billions?...

And the balance is increasing and must increase of what we "have done" for one person, for millions, for billions: the balance of good in the human history.

The judgment spoken of in today's Gospel is constantly being prepared and is already taking place: What you did for one... for millions... for billions, "you did it to me"! □

Excerpts from L'Osservatore Romano English Edition, October 8, 1984.

Operation Magnificat

by Mariele
and Pino Quartana

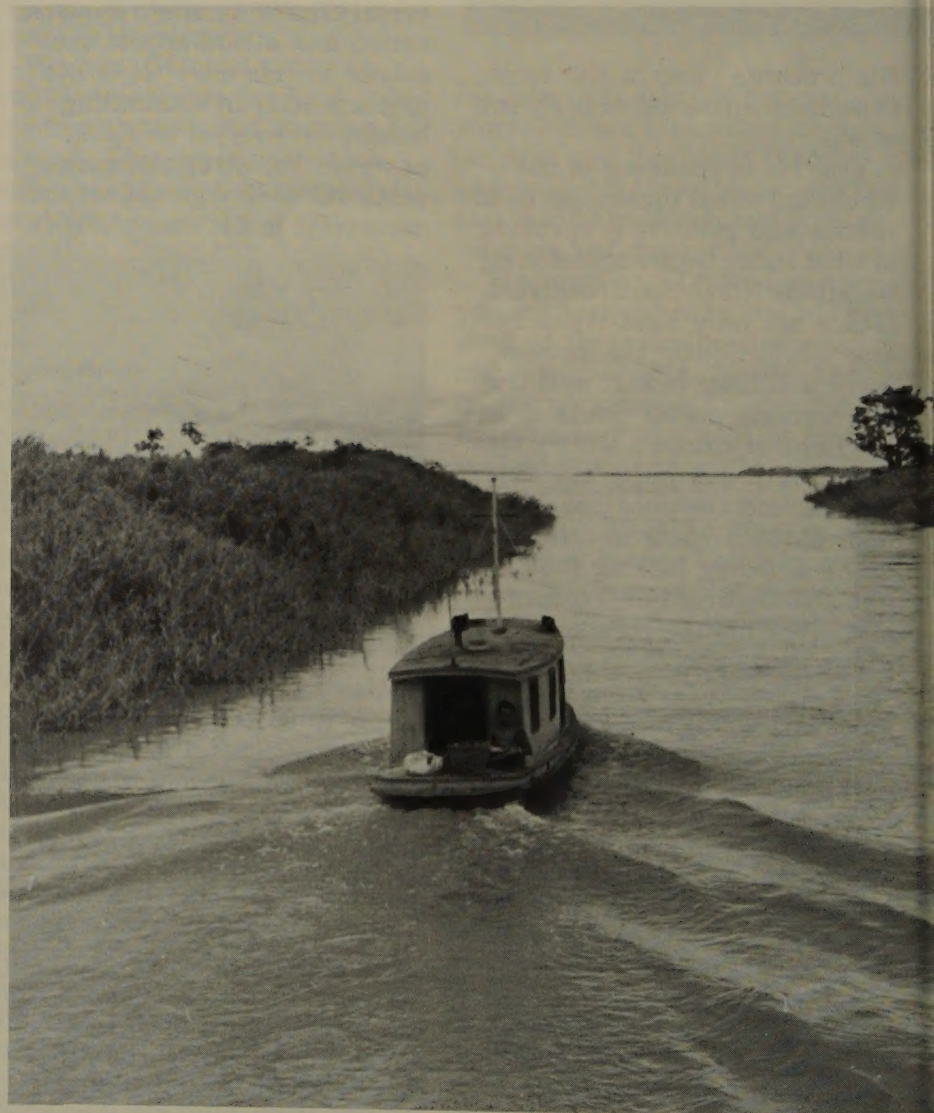
The experience of the posseiros in the little community/organization called Magnificat began, and is taking place even now, in a region of Brazil called the Maranhão. The Maranhão is an equatorial zone, largely underdeveloped and often, in the past, its inhabitants were the victims of exploitation at the hands of those controlling the capital. The problem of the land is, in fact, one of the great concerns of the Church in Brazil as well. The determination to put the words of the Gospel into practice became the launching pad for an experience of human promotion called "Operation Magnificat."

Maria de Jesus: In spite of the fact that Brazil is an agricultural country, rich in fertile land, a vast rural exodus has been taking place for several years now. The consequent loss in agricultural production and the formation of shanty towns at the outskirts of the cities have caused serious problems in both rural and urban areas.

There is no single explanation for this mass migration, but the situation of the Brazilian

agrarian system is undoubtedly one of the causes. Throughout the country there exist huge plantations, belonging to one owner, that are left largely uncultivated. They are the remnants of the age of colonialism in Brazil when the land was divided and distributed to Portuguese noblemen who administered the land in exchange for property rights.

The capitalist system aggravated the situation by encour-



aging industrial development without favoring, at the same time, agricultural production. The results of the problem? the *posseiros*: individuals and families, descendents of slaves or indios who once lived on the uncultivated land and who now, using the most rudimentary agricultural equipment, try to carve a living out of it.

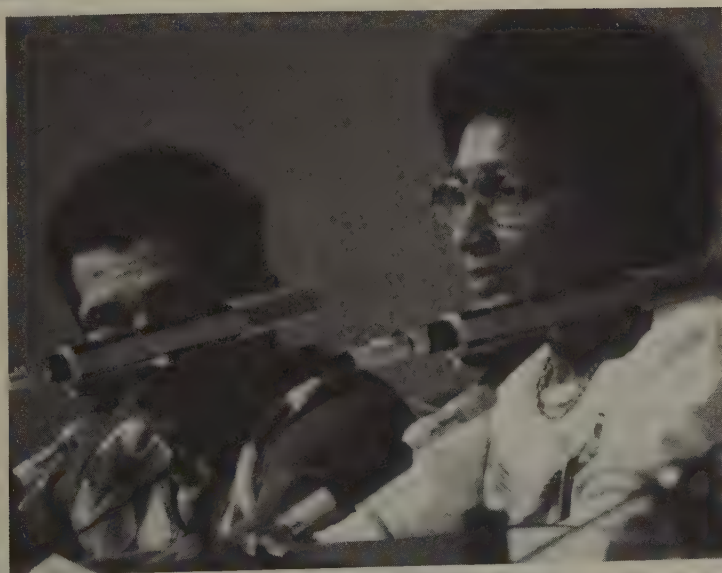
At one point a law came into effect ruling that whoever was living on the land and working

it for more than five years could acquire, upon request, the right of ownership. When this law came into effect, the owners of the plantations, fearful of losing their occupied property, began using every possible means to get the *posseiros* off the land—threatening their lives, burning their homes and crops or else imposing an exorbitant rent that could never be paid. In some cases the owners sent the *posseiros* notices of back rent which amounted to such a great sum that they were forced to leave. This year in the Maranhão region, conflicts between property owners and *posseiros* were frequent and often ended in tragedy.

Maria do Rosario, a widow and owner of a large piece of property in the region of Maranhão, was considering selling her land. One hundred and thirty families of *posseiros* were spread out over the 1,200 acres of property. For a number of years she has been in contact with members of the Focolare Movement and was struck by its Gospel spirit of unity. She decided to give the *posseiros* a portion of the land, 200 acres, and sell the remaining thousand.

It was a first step, but the problem of those 130 families was not yet solved. Clearly they would need to be prepared to administer their property well. They needed technical training and equipment that, while keeping in mind their cultural values, would also facilitate their social and human promotion. It was also important to remember that there the farmer identifies strongly with his land. It is like a part of him; his roots are there. To take him away from the piece of land he has cultivated means to disregard his rights as a person and as a child of God, as Pope John Paul II noted when speaking to farmers in Recife during his visit to Brazil in 1980. These 130 families were spread out all over the land; how would it be possible to regroup them into their 200 acres.

When I became aware of this situation I began, as a sociologist, to work with the New Humanity¹ group which was beginning its contacts with the *posseiros*. The first step was to take a census of all the families and, in doing so, I became aware of the extreme



Left: the environment in which the social experience of the Magnificat is taking place, the island of Maranhão at the mouth of the Amazon River. Photo above: Maria de Jesus, sociologist, and Joca, a farm worker sharing their experience at the New Humanity Congress.

poverty in which these people were living. I decided to leave everything, my career, my friends and my home, to go and live with them, in a mud hut with a straw roof, and no comforts. The only means of communication was a boat which went up and down the river once a day, heading towards the closest city 7 miles away.

As time passed, the barriers of self defence, which at first seemed insurmountable, fell away. The *posseiros* had often been exploited up until then, but soon they began to believe in our readiness to serve, and started to give an active contribution to the work of their own human promotion.

A small group of us began to get together to read and meditate on the Gospel, trying then to put it into practice. It became a source of new life for many of them and led them to discover in themselves their poten-

tiality, to value the life of the other as they did their own, to believe in a God who is Love.

Other young people became interested in my work, and a teacher and a social worker came to live with me there, among the *posseiros*. The landowner continued to follow us in our activities and, realizing how important it was for the farmers to each remain on their piece of land, she decided to reduce the price of the estate to a quarter of its value. Another person, having inherited a sum of money and wanting to use it for the poor, gave it for the property which now, under its new name "Magnificat" belongs to its inhabitants.

A council was formed to coordinate all the common activities which were maturing within the community. It was decided that a certain piece of land would belong to all, and that the profits of working this piece of land

would go into a common fund. The *posseiros*' initial misgivings were, with time, replaced by a feeling of trust, brotherhood and dedication to work. They decided to build a community center and worked on it during their weekends. It was a construction destined to serve as both a church, meeting hall and classroom.

We keep in touch with governmental agencies at different levels in an attempt to ensure that all that is due to the *posseiros* by law, reaches them. Ematur, a government agency that deals in matters concerning small agriculturalists, prepared a meeting to study the problems in this area, not only from the point of view of production, but also issues concerning health and education, in an attempt to find more satisfactory solutions to some of their problems. Representatives of the Department of Health, Agriculture and Education were present at this meeting and, aware of what was taking place in Magnificat, asked us to describe for them this "model" (as they called it) experience.

Joca: We used to live on the land without caring what happened to one another, but when we began to live the Gospel together, we saw very clearly the way we were to follow. One day when we all were meeting together, Raimundo got up and said, "We meet together to praise and thank God, to ask him for his help in our needs, and to read and meditate on the Gospel. If we pray in unity, why don't we work together in unity?"

The truth of the matter was, in fact, that our work in the



Some of the posseiros of the little community of Maranhão photographed beside the boat which is their daily link up to the nearby towns.

fields was bearing little fruit, and our needs were many. We had to agree with Raimundo, and we began to organize a first working group. We all worked together on one plot of land, and then all together on another until, one by one, all the fields were cultivated.

At first it wasn't easy: some of us produced more than others, some had larger pieces of land than others, one suffered from a back ailment and couldn't work as hard. We confronted each difficulty as it arose by meeting together to seek the best solution. We reached an agreement: all the plots of land would be cultivated in the same way, regardless of size. If a person was unable to do heavy labor, he would do something lighter and arrange for a group to work his land. Whoever did not show up for work without a plausible excuse would lose one day of the group's work on his field. This helped all to acquire a sense of responsibility.

Now our work is really progressing. We have no machines but we have the strength of our unity. Our production is increasing. One family that before worked hard to cultivate only a third of an acre, now reaps the harvest of an entire acre.

There are now two work groups but soon it will be necessary to form a third. It seems that no one is able to work alone any more, and this has changed our whole life style. Before neighbors used to argue with one another; now we are united, as in one big family. We used to say, "This is mine; I can sell it." Now we consider

everyone's needs and say: "This is mine; take what you need."

We saw this experience repeated in our "flour house", the community oven where corn flour, an important element in our diet, is prepared. The work is done there now by a group and production has increased considerably.

Raimundo, a widower with nine children was, with the help of the work group, able to cultivate a larger piece of land. When harvest time came he gave one-third of his crops to the farmers who had taken in less.

One day, Jose's wife became ill and needed to go to the hospital. The boat had already passed by but she couldn't wait for the next day. The community decided: "We'll carry her. Twelve men got together and, two by two, they took turns

carrying her to the city, seven miles away.

Jose voiced his worry: "What will I do when she comes back. We have only one room in our house and she will have to stay in bed for a long time." The decision was made to build them a new house. We did it also on another occasion when the house of one of us was destroyed by fire.

Our next endeavor was to build a little market where we could buy and sell our produce directly. We added to it a few other items that we did not grow ourselves but were necessary commodities. Families in the neighboring towns, comparing our prices with those they paid in the city, preferred buying from us. The fruits of our work were put to good use. Just as we had set aside an area of the plantation for the common fund we decided in one of our assemblies that a part of the profit of the market would be divided among the work group and another part would be earmarked for public works. In the future we would like to build a school and a church and improve our soccer field.

Not too long ago we heard about a group of farmers in another area of the region that, due to a drought, had remained without seeds for the next season's crops. We met together and decided that each of us would give a share of our seeds to them. Enlarging our circle of contacts with other people has brought us to a greater awareness of the needs of others and has given us the opportunity to help. □



One of the endeavors of the farmers was to build a little market wherein their produce could be bought and sold directly. Their prices compared favorably with those of the city, and people from the neighboring towns preferred doing business with them.

1) See inside back cover.



In the light of the present moment

Rosa Pagan, a woman whose life was marked by neither dramatic events nor great heroics, yet her actions, her words and her writings testify to a person who lived life in an extraordinary way. In past issues we began publishing her biography for its value from both a human and a spiritual point of view. We continue now with different episodes of her everyday life and the discovery of that "something" that she felt God was calling her to.

Rosa was released from the hospital at the end of April only to return again in May; but by June she was once more at home with her children, hopeful that this time she would be there to stay.

As she tried to regain her strength, Rosa found time to do more of the writing which had always given her much pleasure, and she began to make daily entries in her diary. "At one time I wrote often, in search of something that would fulfill me," she noted at this time. "Now, through this illness, I have that 'something'. It consists of putting myself in Christ's hands, in him who is the way. So as things stand, I don't see a good reason for pursuing my hobby."

But the urge to write kept coming back, occasionally, to her dismay. "Oh my God," she prayed another day. "I know that I am nothing, nothing. And notwithstanding this I feel

that I should be writing...Why have you given me this inclination? Give me the light to see what I should do."

A few days later, it seemed, she received the answer. "Jesus," she wrote, "just as I offer you every little action I will offer you also the act of writing this diary. I want to do it in union with you." This decision brought her peace.

It had been so long since Rosa was able to do even routine household chores that she now saw a million tasks that needed doing, and wanted to deal with all of them at once. Her health, however, allowed for only short periods of activity each day.

Jose and Hector, now 21 and 15 respectively, helped out whenever they could but both now had girlfriends and were involved in all the many activities pursued by young people their age. Eddie, who was home more often, was only 10

and couldn't do too much in the way of housework.

In July, Rosa arranged to have the house painted but soon regretted the decision. The heat was oppressive that month and just getting things prepared for the painters used up the little energy she had. She began to feel ill again, and in addition to these physical problems—or perhaps as a consequence of them—she became very depressed.

Painful news

One of Rosa's greatest hopes in those days was to be able to return to school in September. Deep down, however, she suspected that it wouldn't be possible. Uncertain as to just how far she could push herself without endangering her health, Rosa decided to call her doctor and ask for his advice. She told him of her latest relapse and asked what he thought of her returning to work in the Fall.

Much to her sorrow, he advised her to wait at least until the Spring semester

"How painful that moment was for me!" she wrote later in her diary. "My hopes were crumbling. I knew that the doctor was right, that under these conditions I couldn't even dream of resuming my previous activity. Little by little, I was able to accept the reality of my sickness. I embraced my cross with joy and the depression vanished like smoke in the air..."

Each day, in fact, brought its own cross—some small, and others harder to embrace.

"Today, everyone is going to the Mariapolis," she wrote at the beginning of August. "For weeks I've been waiting and hoping that I, too, might go. I asked Mary to help me discern God's will. Then I left everything up to him... and this is how it worked out. I am still here. I'm not going to the Mariapolis..."

The unity of friends

One consolation for Rosa, however, was the fact that throughout her long illness she was visited daily by members of the Focolare Movement. In her diaries she frequently referred to the strength and peace she found in unity with them.

"I'm thinking about the two married focolarine¹ who often come to visit me," she noted one day. "The two of them are very different. Jenny is all cheerfulness and innocence. Loretta is impressive in her silence, in the awareness of her nothingness. Her silence is a silence of suffering, a suffering which has no need for words, because it speaks by itself. She is like a pillar, and through her I find support in Christ. Her strength increases my strength."

One day a group of focolarine from New York came to see her.

One of them, a young woman from Asia, told Rosa the story of her life and God's work in it. "Oh Lord," Rosa noted afterwards, "in your infinite greatness you call each soul in a special way."

These visits provided an opportunity for Rosa and the others to share how they had been trying to live for God, their successes and failures, and his action in their lives. This sharing was still somewhat of a novelty to Rosa, but she sensed its real value. "At one time it seemed to me that I shouldn't tell anyone about my failures," she wrote at one point, "but now it is all different. We're sharing what is in our souls, with Jesus in our midst, in a unique and supernatural way."

Rosa saw in the visits of the Focolarine a channel of many graces. She gives an example of how for several months she had been trying to attend Mass as often as possible; she deeply desired to receive Jesus every day, but at times she was so weak that she felt it would be imprudent to leave the house and travel by bus to the nearest church. Still she hesitated to ask a priest to bring her the Eucharist at home because she felt unworthy of such a gift. It was only after one of these visits that she found the necessary strength.

"On Monday Loretta came to see me," she wrote that week. "After her visit, I felt strengthened because of our unity, and as a result I was able to write to my pastor explaining that I was unable to go to Mass every day and I asked if it would be possible to

receive the Eucharist here at home. We'll see what happens."

By the end of the week Rosa had received an answer, an affirmative one, to her great joy. From then on, a priest brought her the Sacrament almost every day.

"After communion today I called another focolarina," she noted soon after this. "My conversation with her prolonged my encounter with Jesus. This is a proof of the power of unity."

Accepting assistance but finding something to share

When Fall arrived, Rosa again confronted her inability to return to work. "Today school starts," she wrote on September 3, "but I will not be going back to teach this year. During the months of July and August, I felt a deep sadness whenever I thought about this great act of self-denial. But in the past few days I have experienced immense peace."

Having been away from work so long, Rosa found it necessary to apply for public assistance and in the early Fall her first check arrived in the mail. "I received a Welfare check today," she noted in her diary that night. "Lord, you know me. You know how I feel when I have to accept money. But you know, too, that I want to correct all of my imperfections out of love for you."

In the meantime, those who knew her 'competed' with each other to see that she lacked nothing. And just a few days later the subject came up again. "What anguish I feel in my heart!" she told Jesus. "You know that I don't want to receive assistance of any kind. You have given me too

much, and the instruments of your providence are multiplying. I beg of you that no one give me any more money...But let your will be done."

Rosa's desire to do God's will and not her own carried over into all the big and small tasks she performed each day. In October she wrote: "It is his will that I remain at home until I recover, and therefore it is here at home that I must serve him in all the little things I do. Then why don't I do everything that is 'little' out of love for him? With this in mind, I pulled together the little strength I had today and straightened up my sons' bedrooms and the kitchen as well, so that when the cleaning woman² came the house wouldn't look as though a cyclone had hit it. I was very happy then, because I had tried to please God... There is no way to love him but *his way*, his plan for me."

There were times when, in spite of her financial situation, Rosa found herself in a position to share her few material possessions with others in need. This brought her great joy. "I telephoned the Focolare Center today just to say hello and to assure them of my unity," she wrote one night. "In the course of the conversation I learned that they have need of something which I've just been given. I'm happy to be able to share it with them."

I can't content myself with half measures

A recurring theme in Rosa's writings during that period was her belief that God was calling her to something—something she couldn't at first define.

"Oftentimes I think, or better I feel, that Jesus wants something special from me," she wrote one day. "It is an almost imperceptible idea but one which is deeply rooted in my soul. When it comes to my spiritual life, I can't content myself with half measures."

But in time God's call became clearer to her.

"Am I a focolarina?" she asked. "It seems to be your will. How good you are to me!"

"Oh my God," she wrote on another day, "What could be more beautiful than this vocation! It leaves me speechless... I have found nothing more to wait for in this world. I've found what I've always been seeking. Now all that remains is for me to answer this call, and to do it forever."

In other diary entries, Rosa expressed her worry that she was unworthy of such a great grace, but then she concluded: "One thing is clear: I am nothing and nothing can come of me; but with Jesus in me, I am and I will be, another person. Everything is possible for him."

And in November she wrote: "In him who is the way I have found *my way*. He will lead me on. I don't have to worry about anything. I now belong to the Focolare Movement not because I said 'Here I am' but because *he* brought me here."

"What can I do to serve him better?" she asked soon after this. "I shouldn't worry. He will show me the way. Will I be confined to bed for the rest of my life, or will I return to work? Only he can give me the answer. It is up to me now to offer up each little action, each discomfort, weakness, and im-

perfection. And I must do this happily, always with a smile, so that my attitude will not be one of resignation to something irrevocable but rather one of total and unlimited self-giving."

New Year's Eve 1969 found Rosa home alone. "Eddie is in Paterson," she wrote late that night. My littlest one! He is almost always here with me. Hector and Jose are also out. This is the first New Year's Eve that I've spent all alone. There is great peace in my soul. I place my children in the Virgin's hands and in the heart of her Son. I'm sure that they will be protected."

Oftentimes, even when her children were there with her, Rosa would lie awake for long hours at night. Perhaps it was on one of those occasions that she wrote the following poem:

DEWDROPS

*Dewdrops, dewdrops, dewdrops.
Tears,
falling one after the other
only to disperse at daybreak.
Tears that darkness sheds
on the earth's damp bosom.
Weeping of the night
for all it sees and all it hears
in the solemn silence
of each passing moment.
Nighttime,
hiding its sorrow
until everything swarms with
activity.
But when each thing,
each passion, seems to die
the night tires, and rests its head
on the pillow of the silent hours.
And dawn, that loving mother,
rocks it in the cradle of her
golden hills
to absorb*

Just at the moment the new year was beginning, Rosa spoke with Eddie by telephone. He began to cry, saying, "I'm grateful that you're alive."

"So then, why are you crying?" Rosa asked him, deeply moved. "Cheer up and thank God for his graces."

Welcoming the new year with a hopeful heart, Rosa then wrote these reflections in her diary:

*The old year is passing
the new one begins...*

*I pray.
Recollecting myself, I meditate.
Year of new horizons and wide
perspectives,
wide roads that open up like
a flower,
and narrow ones that seem
always more narrow.
Doors that open
and doors that close.*

*the tears of its sorrow
The nights weeping
grief and tears —
are transformed then into
pearls of dew.*

*And at a distance, a marvellous
sun from which radiates
a small ray that is mine alone.
There is unity, love, life,
strength and hope.*

*I meditate
and my spirit expands with a
desire for life and action.
Each moment, each breath,
is a prayer—
a desire to be courageous,
to penetrate the depth of my being
and there, in his presence,
know myself better
not as I am
but as he wants me to be.*

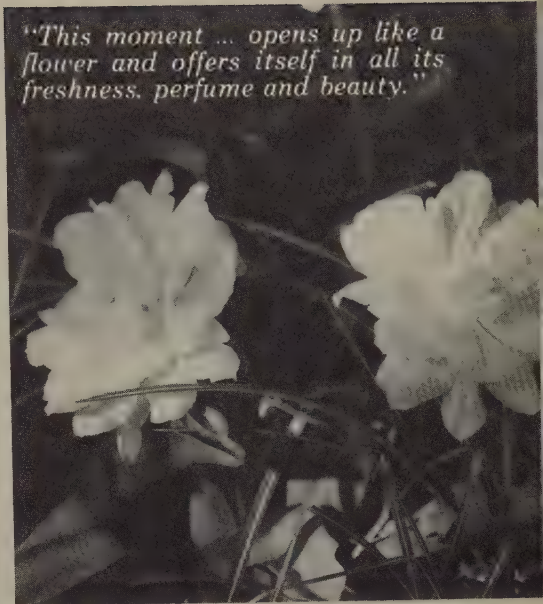
The thoughts of that New Year's Eve continue:

"I feel in the depth of my being the vigor of poetry, the rhythm of expression and melody. In the past I have felt this need for expression deep within my heart. It often became a source of strength in moments of suffering, in the anguish which comes from a great emptiness—that emptiness which is a fullness of vanities and trivialities.

"There were many ties then. Today, they have all been loosed. I have been reduced to nothingness. And this will continue until I am lost in the will of the One who is the Way. Now there is a real emptiness, the one that he has created, and that he has filled with his silence. An emptiness that, little by little, is being filled, because the seed of eternity is growing in it.

"Today everything is beautiful! The past has vanished from my heart and mind; it does not belong to me. The present moment opens up like a flower and offers itself in all its freshness, perfume, and beauty. In this

*"This moment ... opens up like a
flower and offers itself in all its
freshness, perfume and beauty."*



moment, and in every present moment, I will remain in God. And he will transform me. The freshness, perfume, and beauty of his presence will penetrate even the smallest of my actions. Each one of them will become like a small bud blossoming into a flower—a magnificent "bouquet" that I will offer to the Supreme Beauty. It will be a sublime act of thanksgiving, and all those who walk together with me spiritually will participate in the beauty of that moment which is a particle of eternity."

In the days that followed, Rosa made a special effort to discern God's plan for her and live it out. The results were soon apparent.

"Yes," she remarked, "our life ceases to be routine and monotonous if we live each moment in God, for him, and with him." □

To be continued.

1) See inside back cover; 2) This refers to the woman that Public Health sent to help her a few hours a week.

WORD OF LIFE

**"The community of believers were of one heart and one mind. None of them ever claimed anything as his own; rather, everything was held in common."
(Acts 4:32)**

Saint Luke, the author of the Acts of the Apostles, gave us in this passage, a capsule description of the life of the community of Jerusalem, presenting it as the model of the Church for all times.

He brought into relief the spirit that animated this community, that is, the profound union of hearts, that made of these believers one family, wherein everything belonged to all, everyone participated in everything. The logical consequence, and the most tangible expression of this union was a sharing of material goods.

There were even those who sold their farms or their house in order to give the money to the Apostles who then distributed it according to each person's needs. As a result of this generosity, there was no one in need. It was a true Christian community.

"The community of believers were of one heart and one mind. None of them ever claimed anything as his own; rather, everything was held in common."

These words could give the impression that everything worked to perfection in the life of this community, but Luke himself later pointed out certain cases of negligence that occurred in the Church of Jerusalem.¹ On the whole, however, notwithstanding these occurrences which are understandable, the atmosphere that characterized

the Church in Jerusalem was that of a constant striving towards being a true Christian community. It is exactly this striving that Luke wants to underline. The examples then of people who sold their property reveal the revolutionary force contained in the Gospel which can create totally new social relationships with concrete consequences also on the economic level.

No one was forced to give up their goods. Luke's intention was to show us that the Gospel, while respecting the freedom of the individual, can lead us to overcome all the barriers that divide us—barriers that are often erected because of the selfish use of private property.

"The community of believers were of one heart and one mind. None of them ever claimed anything as his own; rather, everything was held in common."

Naturally this social revolution springs from a source of interior strength, from faith and from the love of Jesus: this readiness to share is, for Luke, the sign of authentic Christian love.

Whatever may be the economic system in which they live, Christians will be called because of this love to overcome all forms of attachment to material objects in which fear, greed, selfishness and pettiness tend to constantly imprison them.

"The community of believers were of one heart and one mind. None

of them ever claimed anything as his own; rather, everything was held in common."

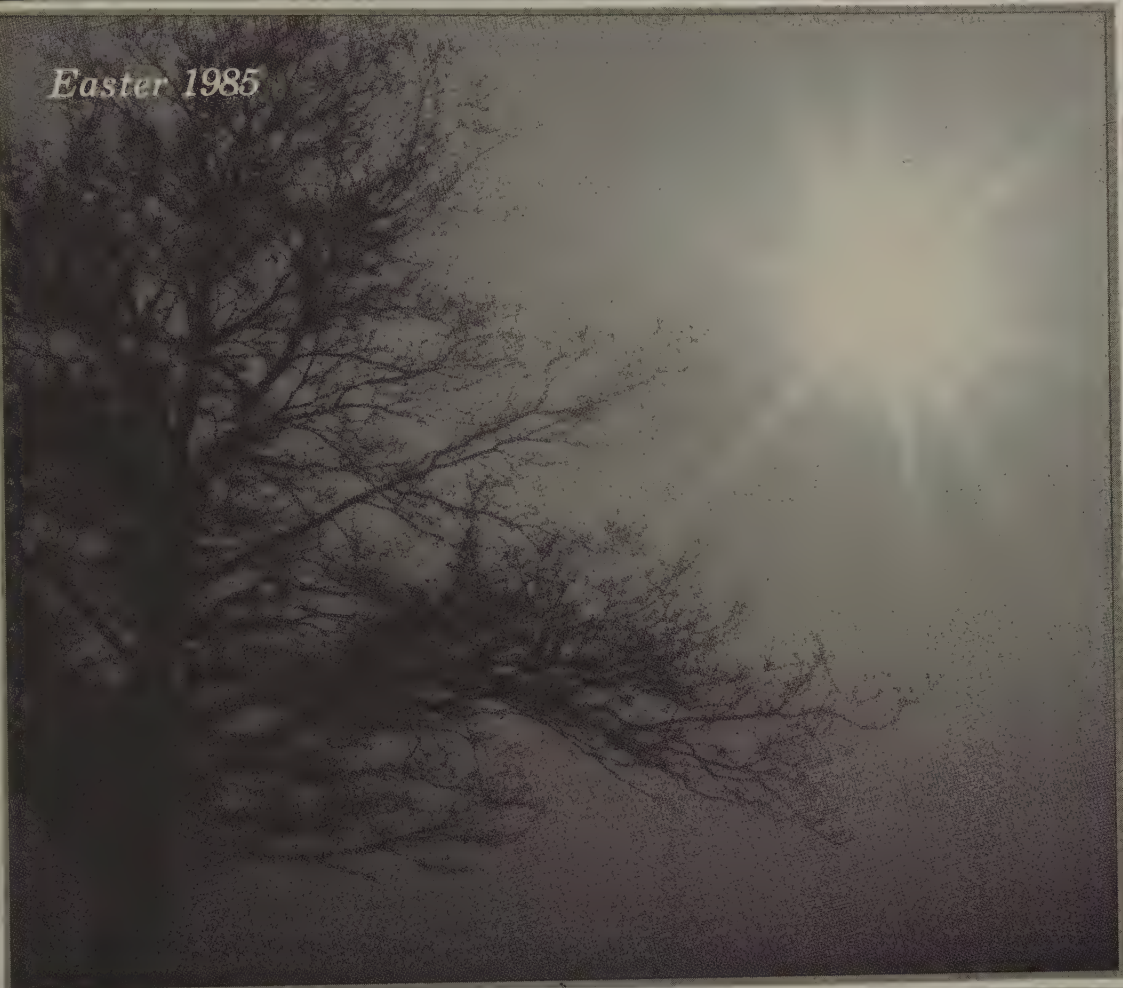
These words invite us to examine our conscience on a wide range of values: politically it means reviewing our duties as citizens who are called to contribute to the common good; socially it means seriously committing ourselves to building a more just society; within our Church community it means offering our spare time, our energy and the material means to help our neighbors, those neighbors that perhaps we alone know are facing difficulties. In the early community of Jerusalem no one called his or her property their own. This is the heart of the problem. It is a question of knowing whether we consider ourselves owners with absolute rights, or children of God and brothers and sisters in Christ who administer the goods they have received, keeping their neighbors always in mind.

In the first centuries of Christianity, the love for Jesus awakened consciences and transformed a pagan world by freeing it from old forms of injustices such as slavery, the second class status of women, of the poor, of the weak, of the smallest and so on. Shouldn't then our love for Jesus be capable of changing the serious situations of injustice existing in today's world?

Chiara Lubich

1) (See Acts, Chapter 6).

Easter 1985



*Yesterday I was crucified with Christ; today I am glorified
with him.*

Yesterday I died with Christ; today I return to life with him.

*Yesterday I was buried with Christ; today I rise with him
from the tomb.*

*Let us then carry our first fruits to him who has suffered and
died for us....*

*Let us offer ourselves; it is the most precious and dearest gift
in the eyes of God.*

ST. GREGORY NAZIANZEN

EXPERIENCES

The following
are experiences
in living the Gospel
which some of our readers
have shared with us.

I work for the state department of corrections. For a period of time I had been working at a medium security prison and, although there was much good work to be done there, I had been looking for a different location and situation that would give me the opportunity to have greater contact with the prisoners. A little over a year ago the opportunity was given to me to work in a Pre-Release Center, a job that I thought was much more in my line, the kind of work I really enjoyed.

When I started at the new facility I was quite enthusiastic as everything appeared to be perfect. Very soon after my arrival, though, a new policy was instituted that changed a number of positions, among them, mine. The nature of my job and also the hours changed. My new hours were from midnight to 8 in the morning. I was sure, however, that it was all part of God's plan and that no matter what happened it was an expression of his love for me.

It was difficult to adjust to these new hours because with all the activities going on at home it was very hard for me to sleep during the day. Things did not seem to be working out too well, but I felt very strongly that this suffering was giving me the opportunity to love Jesus in a very special way. It was this thought that held me there and gave me peace

and a feeling of joy inspite of this difficulty.

A few months after I started there I was called into the department head's office just as I was leaving work one morning. He told me that my performance was not up to par, that I was considered to be too easygoing with the prisoners and as a result of this the person who worked with me was concerned for his safety because I was not doing my job well, and that they had spoken to me about this a number of times. My first thought was that he had the wrong person because I had never heard any mention of this before. Gradually, however, I realized that this was not the case. I was given an official reprimand and told that I would be watched very closely for the next six months.

My first reaction was one of anger and frustration. I felt totally betrayed. Then I remembered that Jesus in the moment of immense suffering on the cross must have certainly felt this way too, and infinitely more. I saw that I was being given an opportunity to love him in this suffering I was experiencing. Instead of reacting negatively, I recalled the words of the Gospel, "Unless you take up your cross and follow me you cannot be my disciple."

So I said nothing to my co-worker who had complained about me and I put aside completely my feelings of resent-

ment, looking instead for every opportunity to love.

A short time later I was moved to a different shift in order to be given "more supervision." I continued to try and love in every situation, to do everything that was expected of me and more in the best possible manner. I also continued to be as fair, as helpful and as open to the prisoners as I could.

After a rather short period of time my supervisor informed me that he was very satisfied with my job performance and even confided to me that he had never had any doubts about me.

One day I offered to trade my days off with a co-worker so that he could attend a family gathering. Another worker told me I was crazy to do that because it was of no advantage to me. He asked me outright why I would do such a thing. My supervisor, who had overheard the conversation, said, "Can't you see he's trying to help out a fellow worker. He's trying to love him." I said nothing, but I was very surprised to hear these words from him. I have also noticed that the atmosphere among the men on my shift has really changed, that they have become much more open to helping each other out.

Soon after this I was transferred again, this time to the job I had really looked forward to doing in the beginning.

C.L.

A very special music school: The Curtis Institute of Philadelphia

A compassionate woman's love for music, and her concern for the lives of talented, underprivileged children, sparked the creation of a "totally different" music school.

by VERA GIANNINI

Founded by a multi-million dollar heiress, housed in what is one of Philadelphia's most elegant mansions off Rittenhouse Square, and accorded a history of producing musicians like Samuel Barber, Leonard Bernstein, Gian Carlo Menotti and many others of the same caliber, The Curtis Institute is indeed a school for the elite. Yet the young students who now walk through its carved doors into the oak-paneled entrance hall, with its grand staircase, its paintings and tapestries, pay nothing for their musical education.

The Curtis Institute of Music is, in fact, the only music school in the Western world where nobody has to pay tuition, where money, really, does not count. What does count is a "native gift of music, a special aptitude for a chosen instrument and personal characteristics that indicate the possibility of continuous further development." This is the policy that has been in force at Curtis for over sixty years, since the initially planned fee of \$500 was dropped four years after its beginning by the founder Mary Louise Curtis Bok, who decided that talented young musicians should not be deprived of the opportunity they deserve because of their financial situation, just as she had decreed that the student body should be international and interracial.

The Curtis Institute is unique in other ways as well. Which other school, for instance, provides its students with the instruments they need, for as long as they need them? Piano students, for example, have their Steinways delivered to their private homes, and students of violin, flute, cello or tuba also have access to their instruments for home practice.

And, to give the shop-worn cliché "quality over quantity" concrete meaning, the Curtis Institute never accepts more than 150 to 160 students at one time.

But why is the Curtis Institute what it is? Who made it so? We have already met her briefly: it was Mary Louise Curtis, an exceptional woman whose father, Cyrus Curtis, was the founder of the Curtis publishing empire. When he married Louise Knapp in Boston he was a young man of extremely modest means, but he had a brilliant mind and a good deal of enthusiasm.

When their only child, Mary, was born in 1876, the nation was celebrating its first centennial in Philadelphia, and the Curtis family took advantage of the occasion and went to visit the city. They liked it so much that they decided to make it their new home and the headquarters of the publishing business they intended to start. The move was made, and the business began to flourish. By ►



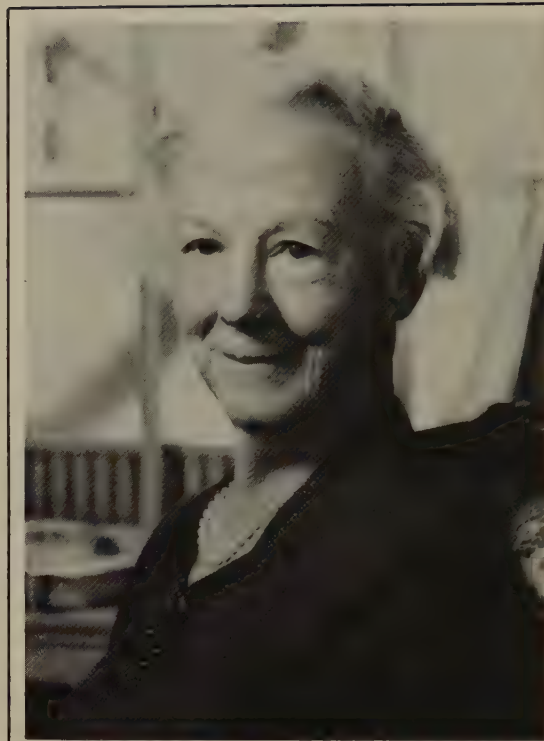
Photo by I. George Blyk

the time Cyrus Curtis marked his first success with the publication of *Ladies Home Journal*, he and his wife could finally afford something they had long dreamed of owning: a pipe organ. They already had a piano in the house, but the organ had a very special meaning for them as it would also later have for their daughter. All her life she had fond memories of her father's love for organ music in particular. At one point in her life, as late as 1960, she donated a particularly fine organ to Philadelphia's Academy of Music. It was the Cyrus H. K. Curtis Memorial Organ and, when asked what the initials H. K. stood for, she explained that they stood for Hermann Kotzschner, a famous organist. As a little boy, her father would sit for hours in an empty church listening to him practice.

Music, therefore, was as natural an element as air in the home and early life of Mary Curtis. As a young girl she was sent to a boarding school where she specialized in music. She had many opportunities to travel the world with her parents and acquaint herself with the musical life and traditions of Europe.

When her mother, who had been her father's first partner and the first editor of *Ladies Home Journal*, resigned from her business duties, Cyrus Curtis hired for the position a young journalist from Holland, Edward Bok who, soon after joining the firm, also joined the family. He married Mary Curtis in 1896, when she was twenty years old.

For the following fourteen years the life of Mary Curtis Bok was filled with the activities



The Curtis Institute of Music

Mary Louise Curtis Bok Zimbalist, foundress of The Curtis Institute of Music. Her associates remember her as "a great believer in each young person's unique personality and in the power of an individual's influence in any community."

of a wife and mother to two sons, Curtis and Cary. It was never just a simple domestic life, however, because both she and her husband had a wide circle of prominent artists among their friends, and there was always music in their home. Yet, there came a moment when Mary Curtis realized that something more was expected of her in life, that there must be something for her to do outside the sheltered world of her home.

She found it, perhaps in the least expected place—a school for culturally deprived children, the Settlement Music School on Christian Street. The poor surroundings, the cramped quarters, turned out to be the very place she'd been looking for, and she went to work with a will. She also donated a brand new school building, but as the school grew, she realized that still more was needed. She had

been following these children, and had come to realize that there was a great deal of genuine musical talent among them. And as she watched their progress, she became more and more concerned about their future. "What will they do after leaving the settlement school," she asked herself. "Where will they go to prepare a career worthy of their talent?" The answer was as formidable as it was simple: they needed a new, really professional music school. And this is how the Curtis Institute of Music was born. This was in 1923. By October 1, 1924, the new Curtis Institute of Music was open for business, and the first students came flocking in to the plush premises of the one-time Beorg W. Drexel town house on Locust Street. This town house, together with the adjacent Theodore H. Cramp mansion,

represent an earlier family purchase, but the third building, another house just around the corner, was a new addition, contributed by Edward Bok as a good wish present for his wife's new undertaking. She thanked him for the gift, saying, "but I don't think we'll need it." "I'm sure you will," was Mr. Bok's prophetic reply.

From the very beginning, Mrs. Mary Louise Curtis Bok had the flair as well as the good fortune to enlist the help of the greatest musicians and the most brilliant minds of her time. People like Joseph Hoffmann, Willem Mengelberg, Leopold Stokowski, and Marcella Sembrich were just a few among her first friends, teachers and advisors.

Artistically qualified students are admitted regardless of race or nationality, and there is practically no age limit, at least at the bottom. The top age limit is generally twenty-one, except for voice (which is eighteen to twenty-six for female, and twenty to thirty for male students), but children may start as early as seven or eight years old. This means that in addition to the musical training, they receive a regular secondary school education with courses in English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. These academic subjects are offered even beyond high school level, giving students a complete college education with a Bachelor of Music degree, all tuition free. The only thing the Institute does not and cannot provide, is the funds for the student's living expenses. But here, too, the students are helped by referrals to various organizations and foundations that offer grants



Curtis students prepare of a performance in Curtis Hall.

and programs for this purpose. True to the spirit of its founder, the Institute cares for all in the most concrete and practical way, and leaves no problem unresolved.

For those fortunate enough to study, teach or work at the Curtis Institute during the lifetime of its founder, her very presence was an unforgettable experience. Many had come to know Mary Curtis personally and enjoyed her friendship long after they had left school. She attributed great importance to a close student-teacher relationship, which may have been one of the reasons she wished to keep the number of students as small as possible.

She was a great believer in each young person's unique personality and in the power of an individual's influence in any community, be it a small town, a university, or an international audience. She missed no opportunity to emphasize this power

inherent in each of us, and always mentioned it in her talks at commencement ceremonies.

Today, fourteen years after her death, one feels her presence, as though the entire school, from the elegant reception hall to every tiny rehearsal or practice room, were imbued with it. It is not a feeling of awe or reverence, but one of joy and confidence, the very feelings she wanted to leave behind. Her "family" knows that it is by living in accordance with her ideals that they can best pay back their great debt of gratitude. They remember that with all its fame, with all the glamor of its stars, The Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia is not a product of ambition, but of a compassionate woman's love for music and her concern for the lives of talented, underprivileged children.

No soft exteriors

I teach English to high school age students who are ostensibly slower than their peers. When I looked at their faces on the first day of school, the conglomerate of needs, delicate situations and problems seemed to stand out. I could see too that they were not readily structured into a daily program of study. Most come from split homes, some are experienced in hard drugs, others have learning disabilities, still others, major problems in their young marriages, or emotional problems. A few speak no English.

On that first day, one of the students who caught my eye was a young girl. She seemed to be on medication. When she walked out, I smiled at her. The following day she lingered after class and explained that she was under medication for epilepsy and that the doctors were trying to cut the dosage. I told her that I appreciated knowing and asked how I could best help should she have a seizure. We decided that our procedure would be to go outside to the empty corridor since apparently she had a few moments notice. Several times thereafter we would leave the room with short, relatively mild, seizures following.

The second month of school came and I was assigned a permanent classroom near to the cafeteria. We moved books, materials, students. That week Sarah ran up to me, grabbed my arm and we were out in the corridor in seconds. My heart sank: the hallway was filling up with students on their way to lunch. She fell heavily to the floor and we were there a long

time. Her face reminded me of Jesus Crucified and Forsaken.

Many students did not understand what was happening, and I was glad that she could not hear their comments. A fierce resentment flared up inside of me towards all those gathering around and then it hit me: They too were to be loved. In my heart I tried, with my will, to love Jesus in them, too. When my friend finally got up, the nurse went with her to the clinic.

The following day she was absent. A few of the students from her former school asked how she was and, in so doing, they traced a brief, staggering history of the treatment she had received from her former classmates on account of her epilepsy. On Friday, she reappeared with several burn marks on her hand and arm where she had fallen onto an electric stove. We talked lightly about different ointments she was trying. Then I mentioned that perhaps the next time a seizure came on, it might be best to stay in the room. She blanched, so I told her, "Look, Sarah, you don't know about these students. They asked how you were doing when you didn't show up yesterday." She answered casually, "Oh, okay."

The bell rang; I took roll, put the lecture notes up, introduced the lesson, but all the while I was filled with anguish. I really didn't know if the whole class would understand. Only a few had asked about her. I only knew that for the next seizure, a ratio of thirty to several hundred students was far better. And I knew, too, that out of

love for her and for them, I had better prepare them. The experience in the hallway and the treatment she had received from her former classmates, though, chilled me. I just couldn't open her up to similar abuse. Furthermore, my students had never shown very soft exteriors. I knew, though, that He had suffered anguish, too.

I wrote Sarah up a note to the office. Some of the boys had punched out the glass in the door so I waited a few minutes for her to get down the hall, out of hearing range. Then I called for the students' attention, asking that they not discuss what was to be said, even later among themselves. I explained, as they knew, that Sarah had epilepsy and that for future seizures we had decided to remain in the classroom. Briefly I explained what happens in the brain during a seizure and then I told them what I had said to Sarah about them: that they cared about her. There was complete silence so I kept going. I mentioned that Sarah had impressed me quite a lot because I had noticed that she never made anyone feel left out or odd. Then I closed the subject by stating that if they wished to be of assistance, it would be to not watch during those moments as no doubt, that was more difficult for her to deal with than the physical trauma. The class was absolutely silent. A few boys shifted uncomfortably in their seats. Then one of them, held in universal esteem because of his tough character, cleared his throat

and said, "Ah, Miss, I have epilepsy, too." I was stunned by his identification with the girl. So was everyone else. All I could say was, "Well, then maybe you can help us understand more." He nodded. I turned the overhead back on and, in only a few minutes, Sarah walked back in. No sooner had she put down her purse than she ran forward. I could see in her eyes that she wanted to go outside. For a split second she wavered and then accepted to stay in the room. She fell and had a long seizure. At one point I looked up to catch a student's eye. I

wanted to cover the broken windows with paper so that the students in the hall couldn't see in. Nobody though looked up. Nobody was writing either. I could not get anybody's eye. Finally a girl sitting directly across from the windows, hearing the students' comments, got up and covered the windows with folded paper.

Slowly the seizure ended. The students began to talk and play around, switching chairs, making shots into the wastepaper baskets etc. I realized, though, that they were covering up, providing a "normal" background for her to come back

to. The bell rang, several students meandered out, another came in. One of the 'meanest' kids strolled out, lightly knocking Sarah on the arm and calling out, "See ya aroun' lil' lady." Even though she was exhausted, I could see that it was almost easy for Sarah to pick up the routine of everyday school matters again.

Since then there has been in that class an unspoken bond—aired always with great nonchalance—not only between the class and Sarah, but among all of them, one for the other.

A.M.

Small ways to love

I am a pediatrician working on a Air Force base and I'm often called upon to start intravenous lines in tiny babies. Sometimes it is easy and sometimes it is almost impossible. Many times, when I have had a particularly difficult time, I turn to God. In the suffering I experience at feeling unable to perform this task I recognize an aspect of Jesus' suffering on the cross and for me it is a special moment of union with him.

It seems to me that when I have used all my talent and strength I then realize that all talent comes from him and I ask him for the patience to do everything well. In those moments I feel a great peace and I discover I have the patience I need to keep trying.

I didn't think these episodes meant anything until one day one of colleagues who found out that I was transferring to

another city told me that he would be sorry when I left. I said that I could be replaced, but he insisted that the way I worked was different, that what had impressed him the most was the way I did the IVs. He went on that he was impressed not because I got them in all the time or that I did it quickly. What had struck him was the patience he said I displayed when I missed. He had never seen anyone remain so calm in spite of the difficulty he knew I was encountering. I was unaware that he had been observing me so closely, and it was a lesson to me about how much God can do through these moments of suffering if I try to live them well.

After a hard week at work I found myself with a Saturday off. I had been looking forward to spending it with the family

but I found out that a friend of ours was moving that day. I thought of Jesus' words: "Love one another as I have loved you," and that the measure of his love was that he had given his life for us. I decided that one small way that I could be ready to die for my neighbor was to give up my Saturday and help him move.

I started out the day with a readiness to love in every moment. We anticipated finishing the job by noon, but as the hours passed we realized that it would not be so easy. At a certain point in the day tiredness crept in, and I had to renew in my heart the decision I had made that morning.

I wrapped every dish and delicate item and prepared each box with as much care as I could. Not only did the day seem to go faster but I felt a great peace and joy.

T.R.S.

Traveling with a “friend”



When people hear how much I travel, they usually tell me how lucky I am. Frequently, I go to places like Chicago, Boston, Atlanta, Denver, and Oklahoma City, not to mention lesser-known places such as Lisle, Illinois. I have even been to Japan, the Philippines, and most of Europe. I like to travel but it can be pretty lonely on the road. I miss my family and the friendly faces at my office in Newark, New Jersey.

It is hard to get used to eating alone. Try going to a quiet restaurant by yourself sometime. What do you do while you are sitting there waiting for your salad? You can play with the spoon, stare at the tiny bits of cork floating in your wine, or look around at the pictures and people. No matter what you do, you feel uncomfortable. After a while you will start to bring some work or a newspaper with you. If the restaurant is not

crowded, you can talk to the waiters and waitresses but usually they are too busy, so you just sit there feeling awkward until the next course is served.

I usually try to spend the night in hotels located in quiet areas, yet no matter how attractive the hotel room is, it is never as good as being home. You still come back to an empty room.

But I have found a way to lighten my loneliness, a place where I am not alone, a "friend" in every city. In a book entitled *The Eucharist*¹ Pope Paul VI is quoted as follows: "The Eucharist has been instituted to make us brothers and sisters so that from being strangers scattered far and wide and indifferent to one another, we become united, equal and friends."

Loneliness is a feeling that comes when we are separated from those whom we love. My biggest help against loneliness has been the sense of family and unity that I get when I receive the Eucharist with others at mass.

It is a daily adventure to try to find a mass at a time I can attend, especially in an unfamiliar city. I find it is certainly worth it, however, even if I have to borrow a car, get lost in a maze of one-way streets, walk through dangerous areas, or take a bus in the rain.

Last year, my department was hosting a conference at the Colony Square Hotel in downtown Atlanta and I did not have a car. I knew that one manager attending had rented

a car, so I asked him if I could borrow it. After hearing one of my vague explanations about running an errand (I didn't feel it would have been appropriate in that moment to tell him the exact motive for borrowing the car), he gave me the keys and valet stub.

The morning session of the conference went later than scheduled; by the time I left the parking lot, it was almost noon. Construction along the way slowed me down, but I finally saw the historic, red-brick Sacred Heart Church on a street marked "One Way—Do Not Enter." I tried to go around the block and got tangled in a series of one-way streets and red lights that took me almost two miles and ten minutes out of my way. I parked right in front of the church just in time to see the people coming out. I put a quarter in the meter and went in and said a prayer. I decided to go into the sacristy and there I found the priest who had just said mass. I explained to him my situation and I was able to receive the Eucharist. I made it back to the hotel in time for a quick lunch before my meeting resumed.

When I am not traveling, I usually attend a church near my office. There I have made friends with Margie who is fifty-five years old and has lived in the streets of downtown Newark for the last fifteen to twenty years.

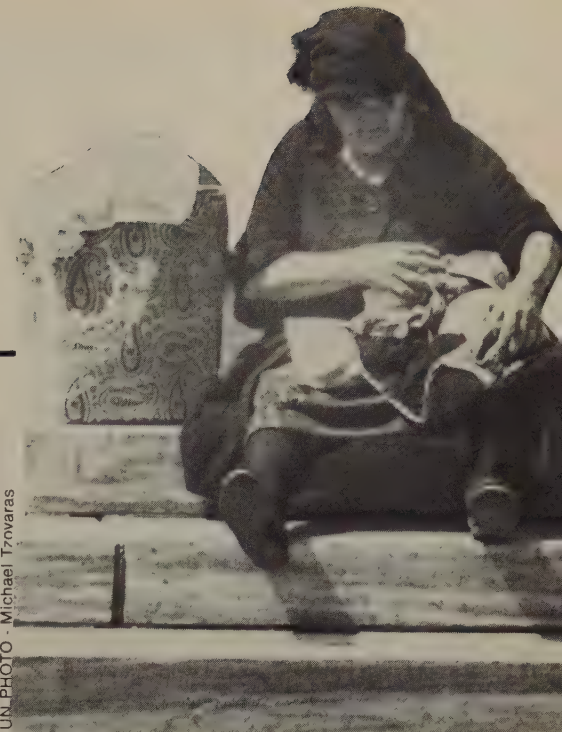
I used to see Margie every day outside the church. Her peculiar dress and baggage indicated to me that she fell into

the category of people called "homeless." I had once heard that the greatest suffering of the poor came from loneliness. I could recognize in Margie a countenance of Jesus in that moment on the cross when he had experienced the tremendous loneliness of feeling abandoned by the Father, and I wanted to try and relieve this suffering in whatever way I could. Others give homeless people food, clothing and shelter. I tried to give Margie my friendship; I tried to talk with her, but she just ignored me for a long time. Finally, one day she answered my greeting and after that day we talked often while sharing my lunch. We spoke about the weather, our families, our health, politics, the clothes she needs and the dangers of walking alone on Newark streets.

Margie smiles a lot more now than when I first met her; she seems to talk more with other people, and I have even seen her attending mass. Knowing her has made me more sensitive to the needs of every neighbor, regardless of how different they may be from myself.

Some of my trips involve several days travel and I have

(Continued on page 28)



UN PHOTO - Michael Trzavara



One time I wanted to go jogging with my mommy and daddy. I told them, "I want to go with you." But then my mommy said, "Maybe you should go to grandma's. You'll be tired." And so I said, "Okay."

Then I said, "This means to love Jesus, right? I'll go to stay with grandma."

When my mommy called up grandma she wasn't there and I got to go jogging after all.

Once Daddy was cutting up some branches. I asked him, "Do you want some water?" Mommy poured the water and put ice in and I took it to him. I did it because I really wanted to love Jesus in him. I think he was happy.



4 years old

FAITH

One day Daddy sprained his ankle and he said, "Will you please get my coffee cup for me?" It was in the TV room. I wanted to love him so I did it. I was happy.

My Aunt Tina was coming and I was excited. I was running and I fell and hurt my knee. We got into the car and we were driving and I was crying. Then I remembered I wanted to love and I stopped crying.

The very young and the Gospel

I had a puzzle. My brother asked me if he could help put it together. At first I said no! But I knew there was Jesus in him so I said okay.

Jenny
4 years old

After dinner I saw the dishes in the sink and I wanted to love my mother so I washed them without her having to ask me to.

Claire
5 years old

At dinner I really did not want to eat, but to love my mom I ate it all without complaining.

Andrea
5 years old



I was at home watching television and my mother asked me to go with her and pick up my sister. I wanted to finish watching the cartoons, but I wanted also to love Jesus in my mother, so I went with her instead.

Susie
5 years old

My brother said to me one day, "I'll race you in making your bed and cleaning up the room." I wanted to love Jesus in him and I said, "That's okay, you play soccer every day. I'll make your bed and clean up the room so that you get there on time."

Jillian
5 years old

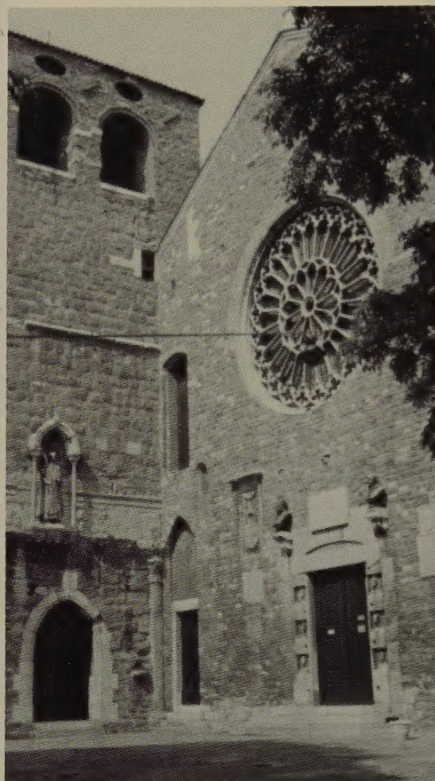
(Continued from page 25)

to make an effort to find a church in the morning. If I arrive in a city at night the first thing I do is call home to let my family know I arrived safely. The second thing I do is call the bell captain of the hotel and ask about the nearest church. So far I have only found three who knew. Usually I get out the local yellow pages and look for a church nearby.

Once in Tarrytown, New York I had to walk to mass. One church was about a mile away but I couldn't always make it to mass there. The next church was three miles away and on several evenings I enjoyed the walk there, passing through the section of town known as "Sleepy Hollow" of Headless Horseman fame.

One evening it was drizzling lightly as I left. I did not have an umbrella so I walked along under the trees, hoping the rain would subside on the way. It did, but during the mass, a torrential downpour began. When it was time to leave, I took a few steps then I ran back to the front of the church soaking wet. I overcame my natural reticence and began asking people for a ride to my motel. Most of the people were women and were afraid to help a male stranger.

As I started walking again I noticed a man with his daughter whom I had not approached before. With some hesitation, he agreed to return for me after taking his daughter home for her piano lesson. A short time later, we were climbing into his van filled with tools of this trade. He apologized for making me wait.



He was a young, pleasant, stocky electrician. We shared about why we went to daily mass and I told him about some of my experiences in getting to mass while "on the road." We hit it off well. He wanted to take me on a tour of the area but we soon realized that the rain and the darkness made sightseeing impractical. It seemed to me, as we said goodbye, that our meeting, and conversation about our common "friend," Jesus in the Eucharist, was an encounter that would be remembered by both of us.

While I was in Oklahoma City recently, I realized how important daily mass was to me. I had located a parish with a mass at a convenient time. I brought a map and estimated

that it would take about ten minutes to get there.

In the morning I decided to stop by the airport on the way to mass to reserve a better seat on the plane. I waited for a long time at the airport and when I spoke to the agent, he was unable to give me the seat I wanted.

As I drove to the church, I realized that I had misjudged the distance. This, coupled with getting lost, made me about twenty minutes late. I had hoped to at least be able to receive the Eucharist. I ran up to the front door and it was locked. I could see people in the church walking to the front to receive communion. I ran from door to door trying to get in. Finally, on the second time around I found an open door but as I stepped inside mass was ending. I searched, without success, for another church and finally went to work.

I was disappointed because I could not believe that I had missed mass just to get a better seat on the plane. It seemed to me that I had made an absurd trade-off.

When I got on the plane that afternoon I was still regretful for what had happened, but God seemed to give me a visible sign of his mercy. As the plane took off I looked out the window and saw a rainbow. The plane flew towards it, then through it, then above it. It was the most beautiful flight I ever had because I experienced within that over and above every small failure God follows me with his ever-present love. □

M.B.

1) *The Eucharist* by Chiara Lubich, New City Press, New York, 1977, page 66.

What is the Focolare Movement?

THE BEGINNINGS

FOCOLARE means "hearth," "family fireside." What first strikes people when they come in contact with members of the Focolare, whether in small groups or in large gatherings, is the atmosphere of a family. It is a family formed by many different people in various walks of life. The Focolare Movement is also known as the "Work of Mary." Under this name it was approved by Pope John XXIII in 1962.

The Focolare Movement began in 1943 in Italy. In the midst of the terrible destruction of World War II, Chiara Lubich realized that God is the only one worth living for. As a result, she began to center her life on the Gospel, together with a small group of young women who followed her. Their ideal became one of striving toward the fulfillment of Jesus' last prayer to the Father: "May they all be one" (Jn.17:21).

The life of Chiara and her first companions, and the spiritual way they spontaneously followed, gave rise to the unique form of spirituality of the Focolare Movement, a spirituality of unity. It has proved to be a powerful means of introducing the Gospel into modern life, of going to God together.

WHO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

Single men and women live in separate communities called Focolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among themselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a day. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. They work as other laymen and women in regular jobs and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their families, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's Focolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same unity. They are called "Married Focolarini" and form the backbone of a vast Movement within the Movement, called the New Family Movement.

THE VOLUNTEERS AND THE NEW HUMANITY MOVEMENT

The Volunteers, also called the "Volunteers of God," are a large group within the Focolare Movement; they would like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel spirit. The Volunteers are the backbone of the mass movement called New Humanity. The aim of this Movement is to help form a society made of men and women who are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then bring new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, etc.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead to the realization of new structures of society.

GEN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another Movement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and the Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age groups. "Gen" stands for new generation. The Gen have committed themselves to living the Gospel message of love and to sharing with other youth the conviction they have that the Gospel is the answer to every question and the motive for everything they do.

THE MOVEMENT AMONG THE RELIGIOUS

Men and women religious — although they live according to their own rules and constitutions and are already a distinct part of the Church through their religious families — can also be associated with the Focolare.

Contact with the Movement helps them to focus their attention on the specific charism of their founders, and to see how it can be lived in the present time.

PRIESTS — PRIESTS' MOVEMENT — SEMINARIANS — PARISH MOVEMENT

Many diocesan priests are committed to living the spirituality of the Focolare Movement. Some of them live in community. They form the backbone of the Priests' Movement which is made up of priests who live the spirituality of unity.

FOCOLARE FAMILY

The largest group within the Focolare Movement is made up of men, women and young people who are connected with the Movement without having any formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their acceptance of its spirit and their desire to live it.

ECUMENISM

The Movement not only crossed the political boundaries of more than 100 countries, it has also gone beyond the barriers erected for centuries between the various Christian Churches.

Ecumenical activities take place in the different parts of the world where the Movement exists.

In the past few years a promising, ongoing dialogue has been established with faithful of other religions.

SUMMER MARIAPOLIS

Summer meetings are held every year for those interested in the Movement and for those who wish to come into contact with it. For one week persons of all ages and walks of life are exposed to the spirituality of unity. Above all, they strive to practice it by creating among themselves a rapport that molds them into a community. It is intended to be a basic experience of such intense unity that the people will be able to bring it back into their own environments. And this is the most striking fruit of these conventions. They tend to be models of a world which lives according to the Gospel.

PERMANENT MARIAPOLIS

The need to prolong the experience of the summer meetings brought about the birth of small cities called Permanent Mariapolis. They are made up of young men and women, as well as whole families, who are there for a designated period of time to be formed according to the Gospel spirit of unity.

They also attend classes in Sacred Scripture, Theology and Sociology and work for their own support.

MARIAPOLIS CENTERS

In addition to the Permanent Mariapolis, there are Mariapolis Centers, which are training centers for the members of the Movement.

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